

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES
Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2001
Alaska Building, 13th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104**

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Present: Meryl Abramson, Martha Becker, Pat Carroll, Gabe Cohen, Thelma Coney, Timmie Faghin, Lee Gaylor, Juanita Grant, Murray Meld, Will Parry, Cecil Pollard, Mae Shields, Karen Sluiter, Helen Spencer, Leo Ward, Suzanne Wiley, Fred Yee

Absent: Miriam Horrigan, Gladys Romero, Peter Steinbrueck

Excused: Marc Avni, Gabe Cohen, Suzanne Gehring, Randy Hayhurst, Cherie Sigrist, Greg Stack

STAFF: Margaret Casey, Rosemary Cunningham, Peggy O'Brien-Murphy, Pam Piering, Suzanne Simmons, Karen Winston, Linda Wells, Linda Woodall

GUESTS: Representative Carolyn Edmonds, Eleanor Edmonds, Steven Colwell

Minutes

Murray Meld, Chair convened the meeting at 12:00 p.m. Minutes were approved as amended. Murray announced that **Fred Yee** has agreed to Chair the Nominating Committee

Program

State Representative Carolyn Edmonds, a strong supporter of the state family caregiver program, spoke to us about the ongoing budget session in Olympia. With membership on the House Health Care Committee she is deeply involved in health care and long term care issues.

Representative Edmonds said the second biennium of an equally divided house has made this legislative session extremely difficult. The biggest hurdle has been no money –no money for expansion, or for new programs. Whatever is to be done in long term care this year must be done with efforts that will not cost money. This situation has resulted in a focusing on policy issues – and, in particular, on a meaningful philosophical shift in the way DSHS and long term care facilities deal with issues of due process. For example, when state surveys uncover problems in facilities, a stop placement is ordered. What are the procedures for the facility to remedy that situation? How can they and DSHS work through disputes in an efficient & effective way? For example, when boarding home survey teams come in to a facility and discover deficiencies, a stop placement is ordered. No more new clients can be placed there. The facility fixes that problem, then the survey team comes back, removes the stop placement and finds another problem - and a new stop place order is placed. That problem is fixed then another is found. This can go on for some time. Rather than

lifting one stop placement then starting all over, Rep Edmonds and Rep Mary Skinner partnered to co-sponsor a bill that would change these procedures. New legislation allows the original stop placement order to be extended when different deficiencies are found. Rather than opening and closing numerous stop orders, all corrections are made under the original order. This saves staff time, paperwork, duplication of effort and keeps boarding homes from being stuck in a continual loop for months on end. Rep Edmonds applauded DSHS for wholeheartedly working to improve the process. She pointed out that a measurement of success is how easily a bill goes through the process. When a lot of quality work is done at the front end, most of the controversy gets weeded out. By the time a bill is introduced, people are already on board, testimony is in support, and the bill is allowed to pass.

Retention and recruitment of quality caregivers Rep Edmonds agrees that this is an enormous problem, but she asks, is this a statewide or urban problem? How do we best bolster this profession? She says the response has overwhelmingly been, “we need higher wages along with health care and professional development”. Both Rep Edmonds and Skinner sponsored a bill that addressed these issues, including a tuition waiver for any caregiver who wanted to take classes at a community college or university. The public hearing was crowded with caregivers and the bill swept through the House with great success, but then it, “went to the killing fields of Appropriations”.

We are faced with many problems. The House cut adult dental care, which leads to inadequate or improper care resulting in chronic illness. Adult Day Health was cut by 25%. “Just compare the figures,” she points out, “\$350 per month for Adult Day Health compared to \$3,700 per month for a nursing home. Case management caseloads will jump from 85:1 to 92:1 in spite of the state’s increasing exposure to lawsuits. What disasters will increased caseloads bring? House Speaker Frank Chopp is 100% behind restoring these cuts. House Appropriations Co-Chairs, Helen Summers and Barry Sehlín, have made no commitments.

When it comes time to prioritize issues we would be lucky if 4 or 5 legislators put long term care at the top of the list.

What can we do about it? Rep Edmonds insists that organizations and agencies can make a significant difference. The family caregiver bill was funded because of the letters, phone calls, visits to Olympia. In addition, under the Older Americans Act, Washington State is receiving \$2M new federal resources for family caregivers. Good advocacy remains the same. It means: call, write, visit, and don’t let up. Make sure you also see your legislators when they are back in their districts. She told the AC that when we ask our legislators if they are supportive of our long-term care issues, not to stop there but also ask what they are going to do about it. “Push that button harder.” Hotline calls have minimal effect because there are so many. The hotline is good for volume. Personal impact makes a big difference when it’s done face to face.

A new possibility she also spoke about was creating an endowment to fund caregiver wages. This is somewhat controversial because it involves surplus money in a pension fund for firefighters and police officers. Membership to this fund is closed. Only about-to-retire or current retirees can benefit from this pension of approximately 2,000 members. Once sufficient fund money has been set aside for benefits, enhancements to the program and a cushion for the unexpected, a surplus of 1 billion still remains in this fund.

Because the state funded 70% of the original fund, there is some feeling the state has a right to 70% of the surplus. The idea is to take the principal, invest it and use the interest. Once an endowment has

been created, it can be added to by private sources. This endowment could then be used to fund caregiver wages – thus creating a revenue source that would be ongoing – with the principal remaining untouched. The pensioners do not agree. Yet, the Senate has already used \$250 M from this source to fund ongoing programs. She acknowledges this is still an idea that is still far from possibility and everyone will join the fray to come up with uses for extra money from an endowment. Caregiver wages would have to become a legislative priority for this to become a reality.

Murray asked about problems resulting from I-601. Rep Edmonds said 601 provides an excuse. Don't waste time on 601. It's moot. 601 was amended 5 times in the last legislative session. It is now much easier to draw money from the fund balance. The spending lid has become more artificial and is now seen similar to a base line. To go above it is not such a big issue anymore. Revenues have become the problem - revenue is less than the 601 spending lid and the lid doesn't matter anymore if we don't have the money to spend up to it. \$2.5 billion have been given in tax breaks, greatly impacting and diminishing revenue. Rep Edmonds also told us there is a Senate bill that would establish a blue ribbon committee to study the tax structure in this state. The state constitution prohibits an income tax but it does not prohibit flat tax up to 1%. The future will be interesting.

Director's Report.

Pam Piering mentioned a list of things that have been keeping the AC busy: The Technology Forum, Universal Design Forum, Letters to Olympia, N4A meeting in Portland. Quite a few layers of activity. Also, under the OAA, Washington state will receive \$2 M federal dollars for Family Caregiving. Of this money, ADS receives \$500,000 for Seattle/ KC. This new money is targeted to a new population group - unpaid family caregivers who need just a little help to make it through. The state portion of this money was so popular last year that remains funded in the 2 year state budget this year and is now locked in to the 2-year budget. A Review Committee includes the Advisory Council AC (Karen Sluiter) UW, Washington State, United Way, King County and a citizen representative. Will asked for specific examples of programs in order to put a human face on what this funding is doing. Pam will report back with a progress report and some specifics in June.

Pam spoke about the complexity and diversity of the ADS programs. When you offer people the choice of staying in the community, there is not as much oversight available. Instead, there's a reliance on good judgment, caregivers, and family support. We depend on this network to inform us when things go wrong and assistance is needed. It is extremely challenging to manage and assure excellence in service in this type of system. There is no ombudsman for the in-home care system. We fund some services and, even though we are not there, we are responsible for what goes on. Privacy and constitutional rights are also constant issues. We need to keep finding ways to successfully accomplish this.

Disability ID Card. The Mayor and City Council allocated \$15,000 to develop a card for younger people with disabilities to simplify getting access to services in Seattle/King County. **Randy Hayhurst and Tom Rasmussen** are on an advisory committee to help develop the ID card. Rosemary Cunningham is working on a web site for this program.

Liaison Report: **Suzanne Simmons** passed out copies of the KC 2001 budget summary for the Community Services Division. The information gave a break down of the dollar amounts funded to specific agencies by the KC Aging Program. They are County Council additions and are funded separately by the Council. The King County Aging Program is funded property taxes from

unincorporated areas. As many areas have become incorporated, revenues have diminished. As a result, the 2002 Aging Program budget is facing cuts. Suzanne says the overall picture does not look good and she will keep the AC posted on the up-coming budget hearings.

Committee Reports

Health Care Task Force: *Karen Sluiter* reported that the task force did not meet in May in lieu of attending the 211 Forum. 211 is a one-stop 3-digit number anyone can call anywhere in the nation to receive information on human services assistance. While there may be standards nation-wide, local jurisdictions will decide how to fund, who will operate and what information this service will cover. Currently, there are 5 models up and running across the country. In our area, 211 is still in the planning stages. Karen would like the AC to be involved in this planning process.

Housing Task Force Report: *Meryl Abramson* happily announced, "We did it!" An excellent brown bag was presented in the City Council Chambers on May 10th. Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck introduced the topic to an audience of about 50. Greg Stack moderated, a panel of three spoke about the intricacies of universal design and Meryl did the wrap-up. Harry Thomas, Director of Seattle Housing Authority, was in attendance. Rick Krochalis, Director of Seattle's Department of Construction and Land Use, (DCLU) was also in attendance. Rick said he was very impressed by this concept and would put universal design material on the DCLU website. He also said he'd have information available for citizens who come into DCLU for the permitting process. Councilmember Steinbrueck told the audience he already had information on his web page. Meryl invited AC members to join the Housing Task Force and said they would be bringing community professionals on the Task Force to assist in moving forward the Task Force agenda.

Outreach & Advocacy Report: *Will Parry* reported on the committee discussion of SB420 which would increase the eligibility levels for energy assistance from 125% to 200% of poverty. Because the committee did not know what else might be attached to SB240, no action was taken. Karen Sluiter told the AC that SB240 was the bankruptcy bill and the Low Income Housing and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) amendment had nothing to do with the substance of the bill. SB240 did not pass. Karen said this experience underlines the need for caution. When there is a recommendation to contact legislators to support a bill, we need to look at underlying legislation. Even though there may be well-meaning amendments, there are so many steps that bills go through that what you want to support, what you think you're supporting, what the legislator thinks you're supporting, and what you finally end up with, can be very different.

AC Web Site. The committee discussed the development of the AC web site. Will invited AC members to become part of this WEB workgroup which would look at initial steps in development of the AC website. Some questions the group will decide are: Who is the audience? Who do we want to reach? What do we want to tell them? How do we go about it? This is a tremendous potential to advertise the AC, to serve the community, to help form coalitions, and expand our influence. No one needs to be a computer wizard to be part of this group.

Helen Spencer gave a very colorful report on the N4A meeting in Portland. (We definitely have a poet on the Council). Pam, Rosemary, Helen and Peggy attended. The focus was future care of the

elderly, which Helen said was enormous and fairly bleak. On day one, N4A Director Janice Jackson and policy analyst Shawn McDermott led AAA directors and staff in a discussion of the nuts & bolts of the legislative process. The following day brought panels and discussions on the senior vote, social security, social insurance, the Older Americans Act reauthorization, and policy challenges in the long term care system.

Planning & Allocation Committee *Suzanne Wiley* reported on the Technology Forum and said that years ago when she first applied for a job she had to qualify on a ditto machine. She said many of our agencies today are operating in that same environment – not much more advanced than ditto machines. In today's age, in order to justify funding, an agency must have some current technology. Unfortunately, many agencies simply do not have the money to accomplish this. The Tech forum brought together these agencies, and their issues, with experts in the field and stirred the pot with encouragement and demonstrations on "how to". Because of this forum many agencies are getting the help they need to make technology attainable.

Announcements:

Regional Planners Forum, May 15th 9-noon

Mayor's Volunteer Recognition Reception May 22nd 5-7:00 pm

Leadership forum on prescription drugs is June 1st. Martha Becker and Linda Wells will be attending

Grandparents raising Grandchildren workshop is June 7th

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:00 PM

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: June 8, 2001, Noon–2:00 PM
Alaska Building, 13th Fl. Conference Forum
618 Second Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104

Meryl Abramson, Secretary-Treasurer
